# NOTE XXI.

# ON ABNORMAL PECTORAL SHIELDS IN TESTUDO EPHIPPIUM GTHR.

BY

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(Plates 3, 4 and 5).

In the beginning of this year our herpetological collection was enriched with a specimen of the gigantic land-tortoises from the Galapagos-islands. The specimen, a male one, directly struck me by the peculiar arrangement of the pectoral shields, which have a triangular form, and do not meet in the middle of the plastron.

On further information as to the exact locality where our tortoise was captured, I learned from Prof. Giglioli, to whom the specimen had formerly belonged, that it was captured by the captain of an Italian merchant-vessel in 1884 on the island of Duncan, together with a similar but smaller male specimen, which was still in the Florence Museum.

Now the peculiar arrangement of the pectoral shields of our specimen quite agrees with the form and position of these shields in *Testudo emys* and in *Testudo Phayrii*; the former species showing the said arrangement with both sexes, the latter only with the males [1]). For this reason I thought it probable that our specimen, together with the Florence specimen, might belong to a still undescribed species of *Testudo*. I therefore had the lower part of our specimen photographed, and sent a photograph to Prof. Giglioli, asking him to be so kind as to compare my photograph with his specimen and to give me information as to the pectoral shields. Prof. Giglioli very graciously answered my letter expressing his regret that he was unable to give me the information I had asked for, as the smaller specimen was sent in communication to the Hon. Walter Rothschild. Accordingly, I addressed myself to the well-known proprietor of Tring Museum, explaining my case to him, and asking for information about the smaller Duncan-specimen. The Hon. Walter Rothschild, whose interesting contributions to zoölogy are valued by all zoölogists, not only gave me the particulars I had asked for, but with extreme kindness and great liberality gave me all information he could furnish to help me to decide this difficult question. He expressed as his opinion that the tortoises of Duncan-island all belong to one and the same species viz. *Testudo ephippium* Gthr., the specimens varying much at different ages. His opinion is based on the comparison of 31 living and dead specimens of different sizes, obtained from that island and now in his collection, and of 5 other specimens including the type, which is in the Edinburg Museum. To enable me to judge myself, he very graciously sent me for comparison 2 specimens of *P. ephippium*: one skeleton measuring 62 cm. over the curve, and a very large unmounted specimen measuring 83 cm. Moreover he sent me:

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[1]) See my note on *Testudo emys* and its affinities. Notes Leyden Museum, Vol. XVII, p. 197.

1°. an outline sketch of the front part of the plastron of Prof. Giglioli's specimen, which shows the pectorals meeting one another in the middle of the plastron.

2°. an outline sketch of the front part of the plastron of a large male, weighing 180 kilogram, and showing the right pectoral shield normally developed, while the left has its middle part reaching its fellow, but atrophied to half its proper size.

In view of all these evidences, and as our specimen in all essential points, the pectorals excepted, resembles the specimens of *Testudo ephippium*, I feel inclined to regard the peculiar arrangement of the pectorals in our tortoise as an individual abnormity.

However, with regard to the normal occurrence of this special arrangement of the pectoral shields in *Testudo emys* and *Testudo Phayrii*, I think the individual abnormity of our specimen of *Testudo ephippium* so remarkable, that I think it worth while to publish the figures together with the measurements of the different shields of the plastron.

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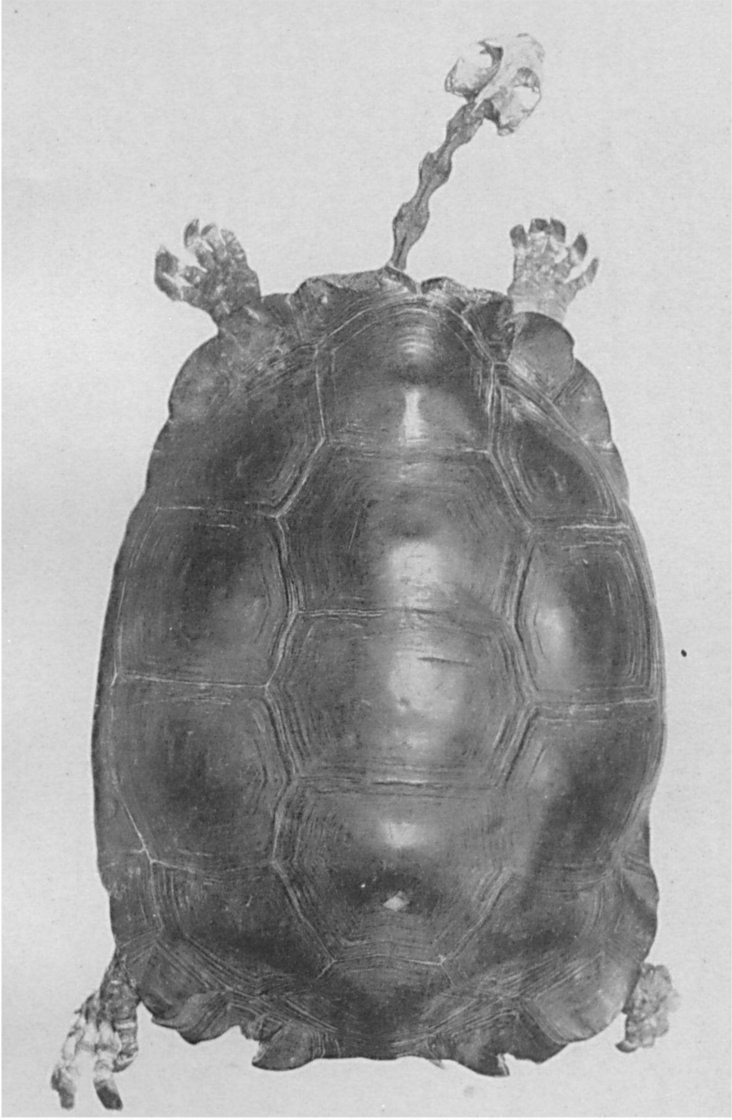
| Length of carapace measured over the curve | 70 cm. |
| Length of plastron from gular to caudal notch | 49 cm. |
| Length of the gulars | 5.2 cm. |
| Length of the brachials | 11.5 cm. |
| Distance between the pectorals | 17 cm. |
| Length of the abdominals | 19.5 cm. |
| Length of the femorals | 8 cm. |
| Length of the anals | 5 cm. |

Leyden Museum, July 1898.



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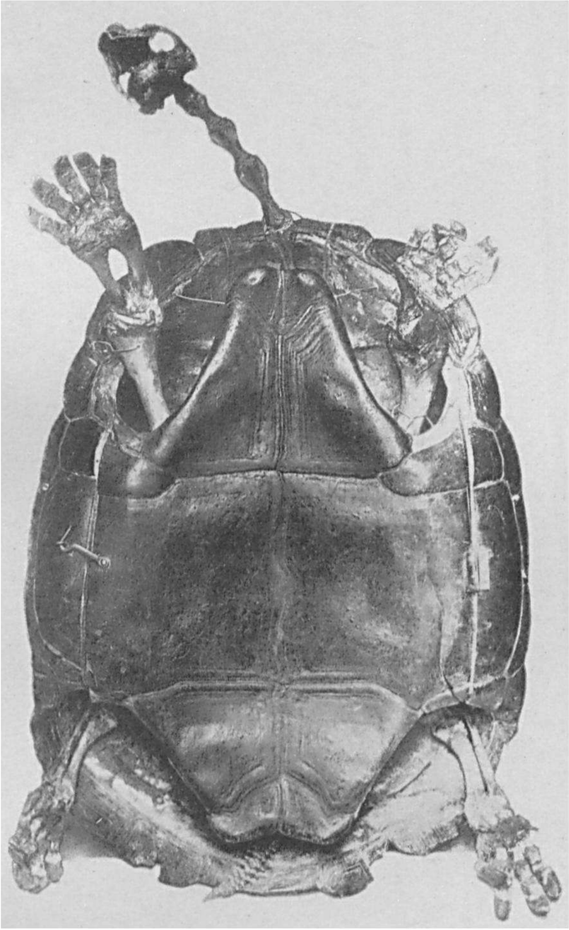
TESTUDO EPHIPPIUM GÜNTHER.



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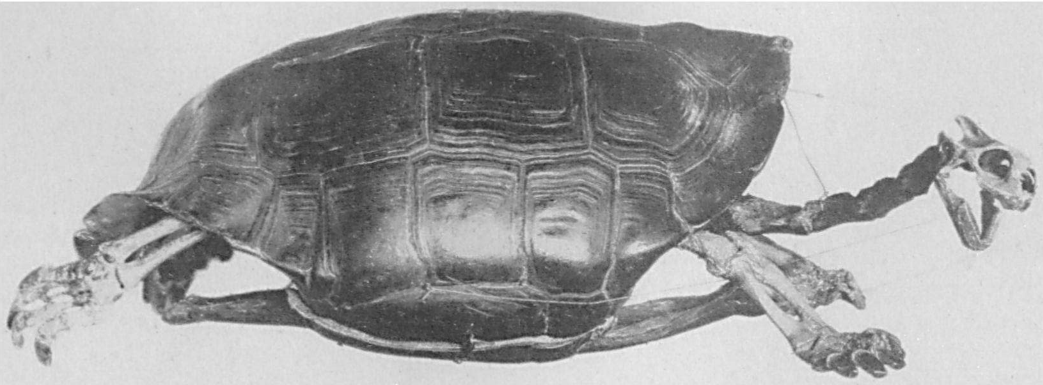

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